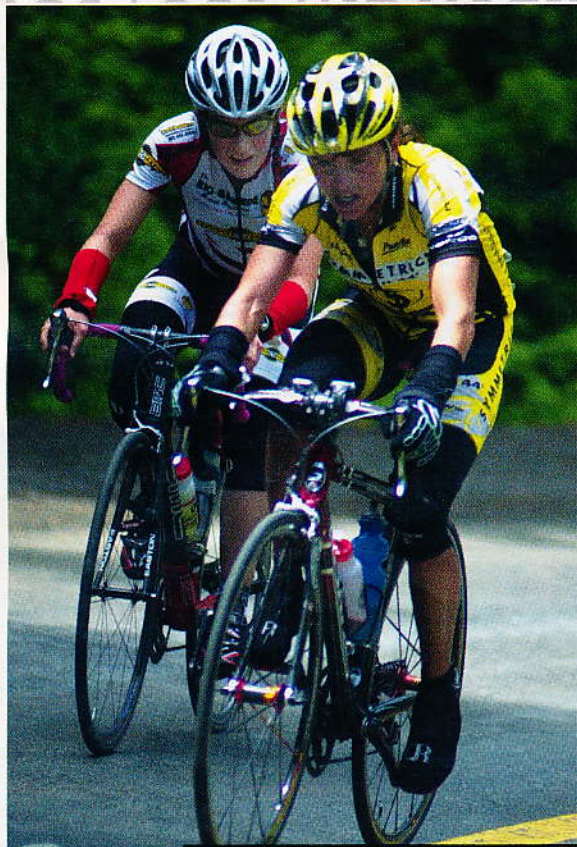


GOLDSTEIN SHOWS FIGHTING FORM



FIGHT TO THE FINISH Goldstein (right) took the lead from Powers on the final stage climb.

Leah Goldstein proved the revelation at the Mt. Hood Classic's women's race. Though this was the second year in a row that she's won the event, the race was her first big test since recovering from a 40-mph crash at the Cascade Classic in Bend, Oregon, last year. She landed on her face and shoulder, the latter still needing surgery, scheduled later in the off-season.

The former world bantamweight kickboxing champion

is a fighter and she showed it Sunday on one of the toughest stages North American racing has to offer. Over every climb Goldstein drove the pace, dropping race leader Alison Powers of the Rio Grande-Sports Garage team. Powers was forced to chase back on over the tricky downhill sections.

Powers chose not to wear the race leader's jersey out of respect for Dotsie Bausch of the Colavita Olive Oil-Cooking Light team, who crashed out on the criterium stage the night before while leading the GC. Bausch sustained multiple fractures to her collarbone, and the tight-knit group of women who race the NRC circuit were so concerned with Bausch's status that they self-neutralized for five laps during the criterium after her crash.

Powers went on to win the criterium stage, but on the lower slopes of the final stage climb she was taking a beating. Goldstein threw in one too many accelerations and Powers popped with about 7km of climbing to the finish. At that point the winning move was already established with Powers being the first to exit the action. Left were Goldstein, Alisha Lion of Webcor-Platinum, Brooke Ourada of Colavita and Mara Abbott of Rio Grande. With Goldstein setting the tempo, Ourada was the next to go.

Lion took over the pace-making in the last 4km with Goldstein chipping in periodically. After those 10 miles and 2400 feet of climbing, the sprint — if one could call it that — appeared as though the racers' tires were glued to the wet pavement. As though in slow motion, Lion pulled away from Abbott and Goldstein to take the stage win.

"I wanted that one for Webcor," Lion said of her team, which had not won a stage. "It's nice to pull off a win and we really needed that. And I want to dedicate this to Dotsie Bausch."

It was a gesture and a sentiment shared by most of the women in the field.

— JOE ZAUNER